

Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 IO-14 AID-20 PC-10 NIC-01

DRC-01 /126 W

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O P 071815Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2371

INFO USCINCSO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1316

E.O. 11652: XGDS (1)

TAGS: PINT, GT

SUBJECT: ELECTORAL REPORT NO. 26

1. DURING SMALL SOCIAL FUNCTION AT HIS HOME EVENING MARCH 6, COLONEL ABUNDIO MALDONADO TOLD EMBOFF OF MEETING CALLED BY ARANA THAT MORNING TO DISCUSS ELECTORAL SITUATION WITH SENIOR COMMANDERS OF MILITARY UNITS IN GUATEMALA CITY. PRESENT WERE MINISTER DEFENSE RUBIO, CHIEF OF STAFF LUCAS AND COMMANDERS OF GUARDIA DE HONOR (SPIEGLER), MARISCAL ZAVALA (CANCINOS), CUARTEL GENERAL (GOMEZ), AIR FORCE (FUENTES), COMMANDER OF THE CEM (RICARDO PERALTA) AND MALDONADO AS HEAD OF THE POLITECNICA. ACCORDING TO MALDONADO, ARANA DISCUSSED NEED TO ASSURE LAUGERUD'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION'S ATTEMPTS CREATE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES AND IN FACE OF POPULAR DISSATISFACTION WITH ELECTIONS. MALDONADO SAID GENERAL PERALTA EXPRESSED HIS VIEW THAT ARANA WOULD BE DOING HIMSELF A DISSERVICE IN THE EYES OF HISTORY AND COULD BE CREATING DIFFICULTIES FOR THE COUNTRY BY THE WAY THE ELECTION WAS BEING HANDLED.

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ACCORDING MALDONADO OTHER COMMANDANTS DID NOT SUPPORT PERALTA'S VIEW AND ARANA SAID HE DID NOT

UNDERSTAND WHY PERALTA WAS TAKING RIOS' SIDE, SINCE HE WANTED TO POINT OUT IN FRONT OF PERALTA'S FELLOW COMMANDANTS THAT WHEN HE HAD DISCUSSED RIOS WITH PERALTA SOME MONTHS AGO, PERALTA HAD OPINED THAT RIOS WAS "MENTALLY UNBALANCED." MALDONADO SAID PERALTA TURNED RED AND REMAINED SILENT.

2. MALDONADO SAID PRESIDENT WENT ON TO SAY THAT HAD HAD ABSOLUTELY NO INTENTION OF TURNING COUNTRY OVER TO "COMMUNICST LIKE MUNEUL COLOM ARGUETA AND FUENTES MOHR" AND WOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO AVOID SUCH EVENTUALITY. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF IMPOSING LAUGERUD WITH SERIOUS MILITARY FORCE THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE TURNED AGAINST THE PEOPLE IN THE STREETS. HE SAID, ACCORDING TO MALDONADO, THAT IF SITUATION GOT TO THAT POINT IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE FOR ARMY (READ RUBIO) TO TAKE POWER, DECLARE THE PRESIDENCY VACANT, AND CONVOKE NEW ELECTIONS SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE. MALDONADO SAID GOG BELIEVED NEXT SEVENTY TWO HOURS WERE CRITICAL AND THAT IF FEMONSTRATIONS COULD BE KEPT UNDER CONTROL WITHOUT TOO MUCH DIFFICULTY FOR THAT PERIOD, SITUATION WOULD PROBABLY STABILIZE AND LAUGERUD COULD ASSUME POWER WITHOUT TOO MUCH DIFFICULTY NEXT JULY.

3. DURING CONVERSATION, IN FACE OF DOUBTS EXPRESSED BY EMBOFFS AS TO ACCURACY OF VOTE COUNT RELEASTED BY ANY OF VARIOUS SOURCES, MALDONADO INSISTENTLY BUT VERY SHEEPISHLY KEPT ASSERTING THAT ELECTORAL REGISTRY VOTE COUNT WAS "ACCURATE" AND THAT OPPOSITION WAS TRYING TO OVERTURN LEGITIMATE COALITION VICTORY. HE WAS FOLLOWING PARTY LINE BUT OBVIOUSLY KNEW THAT WE KNEW BETTER.

4. COMMENT: DESPITE MALDONADO HEWING TO PARTY LINE, IT WAS OBVIOUS FROM HIS COMMENTS AND HIS ACCOUNT OF MEETING THAT PRESIDENT AND LOCAL COMMANDANTS WERE CONFIDENTIAL
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CLEARLY DISCUSSING NEED AND STRATEGY FOR ASSURING THAT FRAUDULENT RESULTS THAT HAD BEEN MANIPULATED BE MADE TO STICK RATHER THAN ANY PRETENSE AMONG THEMSELVES OF DEFENDING A "LEGITIMATE" VICTORY.

5. MALDONADO ASKED THAT INFORMATION ON MEETING BE MAINTAINED IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE SINCE HE WOULD BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE IF PRESIDENT FOUTN OUT HE HAD DISCUSSED MEETING WITH EMBASSY.
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